Starting Line

Find Your Starting Position

Terms: **BAD-W** – **B**lame **A**nger **D**enial leading to **W**ithdrawal, **COF** – **C**ircle **O**f **F**rustration

Side (1)	Position (2)	Numeric (3)	Summary (4)	Common Signs / Phrases /Symptoms / Tendencies / Employee Coping Mechanisms (5)	Relationship with Feedback (6)	Exiting Position (7)
Fixed	**Default**	-0.25	- Default entry point to the Starting line. - Most people start here since society believes abilities are relatively fixed. - Easy to identify - Easy to exit. - Tend to be in early stages of career.	- Unaware of the growth or fixed mindsets. - Assumes people are born with certain special talents. Important to identify and exploit them. - Needs external push to learn new concepts and ideas. - Likely to slide right into Tradition position since institutions and group survival depend on conforming to established beliefs and desire to assign roles. - Some success applying constructive criticism allows for climb left to Seedling Growth	- Does not actively seek out feedback. - Unconscious tendency to avoid, deflect or deny negative feedback. - Uses feedback to determine whether they have a special talent. Negative feedback likely to lead to conclusion lack of talent (positive feedback the opposite effect). As more time invested with special talent related negative feedback is avoided. - Tone, source & form of feedback is important. - Direct unvarnished criticism can cause withdrawal. Limited toughness.	- Easiest fixed position to exit via conscious choice. - Awareness of Fixed and Growth Positions is often the only nudge needed for movement left. - Exit left will be to Seedling Growth Position while tendency will be to want to jump to Hungry Growth Position. - Uninhibited jump from Default Position can often land in Myopic Growth Position. - By default, over time tendency to slide right into more fixed position.
Fixed	**Tradition**	-0.50	- Easy to spot - Position institutions and groups pull members into. - Schooling, legacy, lineage, or "punched ticket" make success inevitable. - Defenders of the Status Quo or the system. - Prone to taking short cuts to success. - Mixed job satisfaction depending on whether	- The past is the guide to future. Received wisdom is to be used and not questioned. "Tradition and loyalty are very important." - The status quo is just fine, it is a warm and comfortable place or "not so bad." "The devil we know is better…." - Willing to overlook evidence that questions received wisdom or tradition. Past success used to defend. - Stifling for innovation and breakthrough.	- Highly defensive. - Strong negative emotions to feedback challenging long held beliefs (BAD-W), Common pattern to feedback is anger or denial followed by withdrawal. - Negative feedback questions personal identity and group membership - Only open to positive affirmation related to accepted beliefs.	- Hard to change since individual identity at risk - COF exit (A) requires ability to question individual core beliefs and reconcile 1st principles - Default exit is waiting on death or luck to exit COF(A). - Exit COF via choice is difficult and requires commitment. - Tradition eliminates the need to think and question until situation reaches

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			employees use dysfunction to their advantage • Believe external factors control outcomes	• Tradition in itself has never solved a big problem or provided breakthrough. • Employees cope by not questioning and living with dysfunction and decline.	• Talking points and clichés are used to argue against questioning even when conditions are deteriorating. ○ "Outsiders don't get it"	boiling point then past comparison can be catalyst for change. • Slide to Hard Fixed as group ideas become personal identity.

Fixed	**Hard**	-1.0	• Easiest to spot.
			• Habits have built up over time.
			• The position most people end up in overtime once they stop seeking new knowledge.
			• Hard to change ("You can't teach an old dog new tricks")
			• Mixed job satisfaction depending on whether employees use dysfunction to their advantage.
			• Belief internal factors drive outcomes ("I am not that smart" or "We don't have the resources")
				• "This is the way I have always done it."
				• "I have run this company like this since the start."
				• "I am too old to learn something new."
				• Lack of desire to put out effort to change especially if it might not be successful.
				• Avoiding learning new technology & methods since they are "just a fad."
				• "You can do anything you want. I am not changing what I do."
				• Employees cope with dysfunction by taking comfort boss will not change.
				• The team has named acknowledged & unacknowledged elephants in room.
					• No relationship with feedback.
					• Generally, builds a wall to avoid it.
					• Never actively seeks it.
					• Vacillates between withdrawal and anger when confronted with negative feedback.
					• When feedback is overwhelming an unsupported response of, "you are wrong," ends discussion.
					• People stop giving feedback since there is no hope it will help.
						• Waiting on death or luck to exit COF (A).
						• Exit COF via choice only occurs when it has to.
						  ○ Remaining in COF is no longer an option and desire to reach goals overwhelms the tendency to stay in Hard Fixed mindset.
						  ○ Financial or emotional bankruptcy.

Fixed	**Myopic**	-off scale	• Hardest to change • Lead to extremely dysfunctional work environments. • Companies led by Myopic Fixed tend to frustrate one or all of the following business owners,	• It's always someone else, some outside force or event that caused the problem. The source of the problem is never within the control of the Myopic Fixed. • "Good things are right around the corner; we just need to keep on doing what we are doing." ○ Need to increase intensity.	• Worst relationship with feedback. Uses all negative emotion tactics to push back against negative stimuli: Blame, Anger, Denial, Withdrawal • Of all positions, biggest gap between internal self-assessment and objective feedback.	• Continually grasping for luck to exit COF (A) • It is not impossible to exit but often have to hit rock bottom or hit with a 2x4 by someone they respect. • Hardest to change – 2 step process.

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			employees, customers and vendors
			• Highly prone to take short cuts to achieve desired results.
			• Belief external factors constrain. Factors outside control prevent reaching objectives.
				• "People are not working hard enough."
				• Lack of focus on key things.
				• Employees with healthy relationships with feedback leave.
				• Employees who are accustomed to dysfunctional environments will stay.
				• People walk on egg shells.
				• Everyone is afraid to mention the elephant sitting behind the Myopic Fixed.
				• Many sacred cows and subjects that are not open for discussion.
					• Kills the messenger until there are no more messengers.
					• When confronted, will turn tables on the source of feedback.
					• Often has all or some compounded tendencies of Tradition and Hard Fixed positions with total lack of self-awareness.
					• Circular logic, "When things get better, then we can sit down and deal with the problems."
						o 1st individual must recognize a condition they are pre-disposed to deny
						o 2nd develop fortitude to examine individual habits
						  ▪ recognizing situations, listening to internal responses to negative stimuli
						  ▪ endure many false starts and returns to the starting line

Growth	**Seedling**	0.25	• Learning to ride a bike phase.
			• First step out of the Fixed mindset side.
			• Open to learning and new ideas.
			• Finite amount of confidence in new thinking.
			• Tone of feedback is important
				• A feeling of this is different and new.
				  o "How will it go?"
				• Many seedlings don't germinate and it takes a few attempts to germinate and thrive.
				• Easy to slip back into the fixed mindset.
				• Employees don't know what to expect since this is new. Tendency to expect things to revert back to prior position.
				  o They are waiting to see if things really change when negative events occur.
					• New relationship with feedback.
					• Old tendencies can come out easily in response to negative stimuli.
					  o There will be false starts
					  o Good and bad days handling negative stimuli.
					• Overtime tolerance to negative stimuli grows.
					• Ability to short circuit Fixed type responses starts to take hold.
					• Success utilizing feedback to improve results accelerates process and pushes to find more actionable feedback.
						• Early success important and can lead to quick jump to Healthy Growth position
						• Continual steady progress is better than skipping steps.
						• Essential to develop internal habit to observe reaction before reacting to negative stimuli.
						• Large early failure can lead to fast slide to fixed position.
						• Failures requires reset of growth mindset.
						• Tendency to want to skip Healthy Growth and just firewall into Hungry Growth

Growth	**Healthy**	0.50	• Learning to fly phase. Cautiously applying ideas to grow faster. • Quantity and quality of feedback is important	• Regular and healthy use of feedback loop • Non-optimal results are met with a balanced response. o What can be done to improve results?	• Able to digest and utilize feedback with minimal emotion. • Form or tone of feedback is less relevant.	• Consistent progress on utilizing feedback leads to the resolution of most problems and allows for focusing on opportunities for growth.

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			• Improving job satisfaction except for employees that thrived in dysfunctional environment.
			• Finding more things within control or partial control.
				o What did not go well and why?
				• Ability to deal with setbacks.
				• Dysfunction within company starts to recede.
				  o Employees that thrived on dysfunction are confused and possibly threatened.
				  o Employees reconsider whether to leave company as dysfunction recedes.
					• Focused on finding the useful information.
					• Open to debate on important decisions.
					• Ability to work through disagreement without emotion.
						o Once low hanging fruit is picked it takes more learning to find improvement and natural climb to Hungry Growth.
						• Slides back into the fixed mindset occur if old habits start to reappear slowly and then take hold. It takes a while but others are likely to notice and say something.
						  o Success can lead to complacency

Growth	**Hungry**	1.00	• Ideal state. • Able to fly, how high and how fast are now the legitimate questions to answer. • Tone of feedback is not relevant. Useful feedback is sought after. • High job satisfaction. Dysfunction thriving employees have left. • Able to identify what things are in complete control, partial control, and have no influence and adjust attention accordingly.	• Building momentum at exponential rate • A positive attitude permeates all levels of the company – "what else can we utilize to improve." • Inherent Problem - it takes time and effort to get to this stage. It doesn't happen overnight. (Must climb entire mountain, can't skips steps and just summit) • Searching for next concept to implement after prior success. • Wanting to pull harder since prior growth has led to even better results • Ability to unemotionally question all assumptions and inputs. There are no sacred cows.	• Excellent use of feedback. • Form & tone of feedback is not relevant. Even in form of attempted character assassination, person would be able to separate wheat from chaff to identify any valuable information. • Dynamic team meetings that allow for questioning all assumptions.	• Success. • Increased success leads to higher risk of complacency and habit degradation. • Loss of leader. • False confidence

Growth	**Myopic**	Off scale	• The flat spin phase. High velocity in many directions.	• The danger side of the growth spectrum - losing contact with feedback loop, quantity of ideas or activity	• Completely unaware of poor relationship with feedback.
					  o Shocked when confronted with reality.
						• Slow down.
						• Self-healing is highly unlikely.
						• Methods to Exit COF
						  o Luck or Death most likely.

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			• Constantly looking for the next idea, system, product, business line, marketing program, sales person, or savior to fix or pay for current problems.
			• Entitled to grow and succeed.
			• Hard work & perseverance will pay off.
			• Often gaps between expectations, perceptions and reality.
			• Low employee job satisfaction.
			• Employees don't know what is important now.
			• High levels of frustration for customers and vendors.
			• Highly prone to take short cuts to achieve desired results.
			• Belief external factors affect outcomes more than internal factors within control
				level supersedes quality and successful implementation
				• Throwing ideas at the wall to see what sticks
				• Tend to start new projects and businesses before others are working or manageable.
				• Not using feedback to guide decisions.
				• Expediency of moment more important than core principles.
				• The desired results are not occurring, tendency to increase pace and intensity. "People aren't working hard enough." "No time" to stop and answer what is working and what isn't.
				• Side Effects - lots of new initiatives, products or services started, people in company roll their eyes with contempt whenever the leader proposes a new business idea.
				• Too many unaccountable people with too many initiatives to track.
				• Company likely to have an Arbitrary Revenue Target (ART) with no concept or plan of how to achieve.
				• When key employees quit response is "We are better off without them," or "We need people that are committed."
				• Grasping for quick fixes to cure symptoms
					• Tendency to avoid examining decisions.
					• People have given up trying to provide feedback since the person will not hear one word.
					• Generally, ignore negative feedback by claiming "no time" to face issues.
					  o When forced to deal with unfavorable stimuli reaction will be dismissive and negative.
					  o Accelerate activities and intensify efforts to deal with negative stimuli.
					  o Circular logic, "When things get better, then we can sit down and deal with the problems."
					• Find an external excuse instead of examining decisions.
					  o The problems are overwhelming or unsolvable
					  o "I can't find competent people."
					  o "It is a tough industry."
						▪ Stress heart attacks.
						▪ Burnout
						o Myopic Growth leaders tend to think eventually one of their many decisions will lead to success.
						o By choice, recognize condition they are pre-disposed to deny
						o Find fortitude to examine individual habits
						  ▪ recognizing the situation, listening to internal responses to negative stimuli
						o Develops patience to endure many false starts and making small steeps from Seedling Growth phase without skipping development process.

Notes

1. **Side**
   a. Fixed – Assumes people's talents and capabilities are set. Little can be done to develop them.
   b. Growth – Assumes people's talents and capabilities can be developed and improved with focused effort and practice.
2. **Position**
   a. Eight positions on the starting line. Four on each fixed and growth side.
3. **Numeric**
   a. Estimated score on +1 to -1 one scale

(A) – Options – There are three option to exiting the **Circle Of Frustration ("COF"):** Death, Luck and Choice.
http://www.businessalignmenttools.com/2016/06/14/3-ways-to-escape…e-of-frustration/

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